

Based on known information, it was determined that with this method, the likelihood of finding a swift fox whose home range overlapped the transect was about 30%. In Alberta, the issue is coyote snaring. Stopping snares still have the potential to capture swift fox around the middle.

Comment: Marsha: If you set snares correctly and monitor them there should be no reason to catch swift fox.

Response: Axel: The issue in Alberta is kill snares and swift fox being captured. Canada is getting its first Endangered Species Act. How these issues will play into this process is unclear. We are hoping the act will be pro landowner.

Comment: Lu: One should look at the implications of poisoning to the ecosystem. In terms of swift fox, poisoning might actually benefit them; although ethics is questionable.

Comment: Brian: This would work for snares too.

Comment: Lu: Right.

Response: Axel: In his study, there was an intensive coyote kill which resulted in a significant reduction in coyotes. Incidentally, however, they had the highest mortality rate among swift fox during that time, because of increased avian predation on swift fox. One could argue that getting rid of coyotes in Canada might make it easier for eagles to prey upon swift fox because coyote absence makes prey available for migrating eagles which consequently are more likely to settle in the swift fox area. Coyote control does not necessarily benefit swift foxes.

Comment: Lu: The emphasis of the Canadian ESA will be on incentives, but there will be some punitive aspects as well. More likely to be called a Species at Risk Act (SARA).

Turner Properties Swift Fox Reintroduction Program - Kyran Kunkel

Kyran thanked the Team for the meeting invitation and the opportunity to interact with the Team. The Feasibility Study Plan for the Reintroduction of Swift Foxes to Turner Properties in the Great Plains was sent out to Team members and others for review, and the group appreciated the comments they received on the document. Ted Turner is the largest private landowner in the US. And he is interested in doing conservation work in the area where he has properties. The Turner Endangered Species Fund (TESF) is a division of Turner Enterprises, concentrating on the conservation of imperiled species on Turner properties. These properties currently encompass about 2 million acres in the U.S., and continue to increase. The focus for conservation efforts is on private lands. Currently, Turner is concentrating on the grasslands. In South Dakota, Turner owns the Bad River Ranch, on which swift fox restoration is one of the primary projects proposed. TESF doesn't want to go it alone; they want input from the Team and as much expertise as they can round up. For example does it make sense to go ahead with a reintroduction and in the manner in which they are proposing? Currently working to address the comments sent by the Team on the Feasibility Study. The next document TESF will produce will be an actual reintroduction plan. TESF is using the IUCN reintroduction criteria.

Reintroducing swift fox on the Bad River Ranch in South Dakota will be an experiment. Lu Carbyn has been very much involved with this project, and is the initial author of the Feasibility Study.

Question: Christiane: Is there a time line?

Answer: Kyran: No. If the feasibility work looks good, the earliest reintroduction would take place next fall.

Comment: Lu: This is an impressive initiative. It's an opportunity for the Team to take conservation efforts forward into another arena. Turner has the resources for putting in place surveys for prey, etc. This is an exciting effort to look at the bigger picture. In that regard there is opportunity for north-south involvement in looking at where the swift foxes are, and looking at the various components that appear to be important there, and then looking at areas where we think the swift foxes ought to be and aren't, and determining why the foxes aren't there. If we had the kind of surveys being done on the Turner ranch in South Dakota going on throughout the range, both where swift fox occur and where they do not, and then compare these data, we could help answer this question.

Comment: Kyran: TEF is also interested in black-tailed prairie dog reintroduction and ultimately, black-footed ferret reintroduction.

Comment: Christiane: The states have been working hard for many years to find out where swift fox occur. We are now working on looking at variables like habitat to answer where they are not. States still feel that there are other higher priorities at this time. This is a good study, but there are other higher priorities.

Comment: Pete: Priorities vary between agencies and publics.

Comment: Brian: That's why we have Conservation Assessment and Conservation Strategy (CACS). The Canadian reintroduction program was undertaken because it was the only option for the species there.

Comment: Eileen: The CACS is a rangewide plan; states may have different priorities. In South Dakota, the swift fox is a state threatened species, and SD is legally mandated to recover it. But, agree that the CACS shows the direction of the Team.

Comment: Brian: Need to assess how the proposed Turner ESF reintroduction fits into the CACS.

Question: Bob Sullivan: There are a large number of interests here at stake concerning the swift fox, yet it's not really a priority for the USFWS. That priority is determined by the status of other species. Whereas the states may be more limited in the species they have to address and therefore the swift fox is a higher priority for the states.

Answer: Pete: If the swift fox is removed from the candidate list, South Dakota could move along more easily at restoring the species to the state because the threat of listing would be removed from private landowners.

Answer: Susan: The USFWS has a limited amount of money and must set their priorities.

Comment: Marsha: Addressing the Turner ESF Feasibility Study proposal. Although food

availability is important, historically food has not been a big issue for swift fox. Invertebrates are difficult to measure, and everything is so dynamic in the prairie that what you get this year may not be what's there next year. It would be nice to see the reintroduction proposal long before implementation. We received this proposal after some parts of the plan were already underway. The Team has a lot of expertise and knowledge and Turner ESF should use it. We are all working toward the conservation of swift fox.

Response: Kyran: Hope to have the next phase proposal done by the end of the year. We're not locked into reintroduction, and if it makes more sense to put our money into another facet of conservation, we would be open to do that. It doesn't have to occur on Turner properties. We are interested in carnivore conservation and restoration.

Question: Christiane: Has South Dakota considered using natural expansion or translocation of their current population from Fall River County versus reintroduction? If South Dakota has a population that is unable to increase or disperse, why spend a lot of money to bring foxes in from somewhere else without spending the same amount of money determining why they aren't there in the first place. Or spend the money trying to make the existing population more successful. And, if you can't make it more successful, how can a reintroduced population be more successful?

Response: Paul: The reintroduced population could be more successful.

Response: Kyran: We are still looking at these questions. Has the range been expanding or shrinking? Or is the range expanding only because you are looking?

Comment: Eileen: South Dakota would not support a translocation at this time. The USFS is only looking on federal land and not on private land.

Comment: Paul: The science of reintroduction is an art. You could spend a lot of time doing science to get an answer that is not meaningful. Sometimes you just have to do it and let the chips fall where they may. That's really where we are in our understanding of the science of reintroduction.

Comment: Lu: We need to bring as much science into the art as we can.

Comment: Marsha: Regardless, I'm sure Turner wants to spend his money wisely.

Blackfeet/Defenders of Wildlife Reintroduction Program - Minnette Johnson

The Canadians have been successfully reintroducing swift fox for 16 years and are winding their program down. They had planned to release the remaining captive foxes in Grasslands National Park. In the meantime, there was an absence of swift fox in the state of Montana. So the Blackfeet Tribe, Defenders of wildlife and the Cochrane Ecological Institute entered into a partnership to initiate a reintroduction program in Montana. The swift fox was once common in Montana. There were 43 sightings near Browning, MT, near the release site, but no sighting records have occurred in recent times. Since 1978, swift fox occurrence records were associated with the Canadian reintroduction program. In 1993 a habitat survey was conducted by Brian Giddings, Craig Knowles and Mamo. They identified the best remaining